

# MEMORIALS

PRESENTED TO THE

C O N G R E S S

OF THE

2,

United States of America,

BY THE

DIFFERENT SOCIETIES

INSTITUTED FOR PROMOTING THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c. &c.

IN THE STATES OF

RHODE-ISLAND, CONNECTICUT, NEW-YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, MARYLAND, AND VIRGINIA.

<sup>K</sup>  
*Pennsylvania, Commonwealth of.*

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF "THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, AND THE RELIEF OF FREE NEGROES UNLAWFULLY HELD IN BONDAGE, AND FOR IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF THE AFRICAN RACE."



P H I L A D E L P H I A :

PRINTED BY Francis Bailey, No. 116, HIGH-STREET.

M DCC XCH.





THE following Memorials were presented and read in the House of Representatives of the United States, on the eighth day of December, 1791, when they were referred to a select committee.

The Congress having made no further progress in this business, the Pennsylvania Society conceive it to be a matter of general importance that these Memorials should be published, for the information of their fellow-citizens, and for the encouragement of the friends of universal liberty, both with us and in Europe.

And

And we trust it will appear, that the different Abolition Societies, within the United States, have neither been deficient in their endeavors to promote the laudable purposes of their institution, nor in a due respect to government in their mode of application.

Having thus, as humble instruments, performed what we believe to be our duty in this instance, we chearfully wait for the result—and leave the business at present, with a confidence, that the Great Disposer of all human events will, in his own time, abolish the inhuman and iniquitous custom of enslaving our fellow-creatures.

*Philadelphia, January 2, 1792.*

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## Rhode-Island.

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To the SENATE and REPRESENTA-  
TIVES of the UNITED STATES—

*The PROVIDENCE SOCIETY, for  
promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the  
Relief of Persons unlawfully held in Bon-  
dage, and for improving the Condition of  
the African Race—consisting of numbers  
of the Citizens of the Districts of RHODE-  
ISLAND and MASSACHUSETTS, and o-  
thers, incorporated by law:*

MOST RESPECTFULLY SOLICIT THE ATTENTION  
OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE UNITED STATES  
TO THE SLAVE TRADE.

**A**LTHOUGH it has been the policy  
of the American Union to suffer the  
powers of authorising domestic slavery,  
and of importing slaves into the United  
States, for a limited time; yet, under our  
present excellent Constitution, Congress  
a “ have



“ have authority to restrain the citizens  
 “ of the United States from carrying on  
 “ the African trade for the purpose of  
 “ supplying foreigners with slaves, and to  
 “ prohibit foreigners from fitting out ves-  
 “ sels in any port of the United States, for  
 “ transporting persons from Africa to any  
 “ foreign port.”

The salutary regulations already adopt-  
 ed, for securing the rights of the Indian  
 nations on our western frontiers, are con-  
 sidered as a pledge to the world of the  
 humanity of Congress : and, while the  
 means of securing our own citizens against  
 a deplorable captivity among the savages  
 of this continent, or the cruel pirates of  
 the Mediterranean, are under investiga-  
 tion, it is our earnest desire, that the means  
 of protecting the people of foreign coun-  
 tries against similar outrages on the sacred  
 rights of humanity from our own citizens,  
 may also be the subject of deliberation.

That the slave trade, as it is carried on  
 in Europe, and by some individuals here,  
 is not only against the sacred laws of the  
 great RULER of the Universe, “ who hath  
 “ made

“made of one blood, all the nations of  
“men,” but that it is also injurious to the  
true commercial interest of a nation, and  
destructive of the lives of seamen, has  
been proved, by a course of reasoning  
and experience, so plainly, we conceive,  
as to require no further elucidation.

For several years last past, many of the  
greatest and best characters in Europe  
have laboured to reform the commercial  
systems there adopted, by a total abolition  
of the slave trade. But, whether Great-  
Britain or France will have the credit of  
first overcoming deep-rooted prejudices  
and mistaken policy, and of taking the  
lead in reformation on this subject—or,  
whether the force of custom and habit  
will, for a longer season, stifle the voice  
of truth and humanity in those nations,  
time is yet to discover.

It is happy for us in this particular, that  
there is the utmost reason to hope, that  
our commercial system, yet in embryo,  
will be strongly impressed with those great  
principles of natural and political law,  
which gave birth to the late Revolution,  
and

and form and consistency to this great empire.

The nations in Europe who carry on this iniquitous traffic, and thereby furnish their own colonies with labourers, flatter themselves with advantages, not to be contemplated by the government of the United States; whose citizens, so far as they are concerned in it, offer themselves as volunteers in a scene of cruelty and blood, and become the authors of the most painful slavery, merely to accumulate private wealth.

The capital stock employed in this trade, on its prohibition, it is conceived, might be employed to much greater public advantage in the fisheries and other branches of commerce, or in manufactures, for the establishment of which nothing seems more wanting than capital stocks.

But, it is not the object of this address to enter into particulars; without bringing the subject up to view, we should have failed in a duty we owe to those who are endowed with our common nature. The wisdom and goodness of Congress, we have



have full confidence, will suggest and secure the execution of the most effectual measures for making the justice and humanity of the nation commensurate with its jurisdiction.

(Copy.)

By order of the Society,

(Signed)

DAVID HOWELL, *President.*

*Providence, Dec. 28, 1790.*

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## Connecticut.

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To the Honorable the SENATE and  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES of  
the UNITED STATES of AME-  
RICA, in Congress assembled—

*The PETITION and ADDRESS of  
the CONNECTICUT SOCIETY,  
for the promotion of Freedom, and for the  
relief of Persons unlawfully holden in  
Bondage :*

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT, from a sober conviction of the  
unrighteousness of slavery, your pe-  
titioners have long beheld, with grief, a  
considerable number of our fellow-men  
doomed to perpetual bondage, in a coun-  
try which boasts of her freedom.

That, though all men are of the same  
species, and by nature have an equal claim  
to



to all the enjoyments of life, it has been the unhappy policy of this country, to impose slavery and want on those who are brought from Africa; while we hold forth the prospects of liberty and plenty to emigrants from all other countries.

That the principle, “that the labour of “slaves is necessary to the due cultivation “of our land,” has introduced a commerce in the human race far beyond the pretended necessities of our country, and has led the citizens of these States into a very extensive trade for the supply of other nations with slaves—a trade, in the end, generally unproductive to the adventurers, always destructive to the lives and morals of seamen, and, as relative to the victims devoted to slavery, most inhuman, not only with respect to their subsequent situation, but especially during their passage.

Your petitioners are fully of opinion, that calm reflection will at last convince the world, that the whole system of African slavery is unjust in its nature—impolitic in its principles—and, in its consequences,

quences, ruinous to the industry and enterprise of the citizens of these States.

From a conviction of these truths, your petitioners were led, by motives, we conceive, of general philanthropy, to associate ourselves for the protection and assistance of this unfortunate part of our fellow-men; and, though this society has been lately established, it has now become generally extensive through this state, and, we fully believe, embraces, on this subject, the sentiments of a large majority of its citizens.

With such sentiments, we, your petitioners, esteem it our indispensable duty to join with other societies, instituted for the same purpose, in requesting the interposition of the Supreme Council of the nation in behalf of that unhappy people, to check the progress of this evil system, and, while it exists, to meliorate the condition of the unfortunate sufferers.

Your petitioners rejoice that the subject excited the attention of the House of Representatives the last session; and, though it is by no means requested that Congress

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will

will enact laws which would impugn the Constitution of these United States, or be inconsistent with the general welfare of their country, yet your petitioners earnestly pray, that Congress will exert the powers constitutionally vested in them, to pass such laws as will prevent, as much as possible, the horrors of the slave trade—will prohibit the citizens of the United States from carrying on the trade, for the purpose of supplying foreigners with slaves—will prohibit foreigners from fitting out vessels in any port of the United States, for transporting persons from Africa to any foreign port—and, as far as possible, will alleviate the sufferings of those who are now in slavery, and check the further progress of this inhuman commerce.

Your petitioners, assuring your Honors that their united exertions will ever aim at the happiness and prosperity of the American Republic, cheerfully submit this their request to the wisdom of Congress, with full confidence, that that honorable body will ever pursue the great  
objects



objects of all good governments, to increase the felicity, and meliorate the condition, of the human race.

IN the name, and by order, of the  
Connecticut Society, for the promotion of freedom, &c.

EZRA STILES, *President of  
the said Society.*

SIMEON BALDWIN, *Secretary.*

*New-Haven, Jan. 7, 1791.*

(Copy.)



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## New-York.

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To the Honorable the CONGRESS of  
the UNITED STATES of AME-  
RICA—

*The MEMORIAL of the NEW-YORK  
SOCIETY, for promoting the Manumif-  
sion of Slaves, and protecting such of them  
as have been, or may be, liberated.*

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT your memorialists have long  
contemplated, with pain and horror,  
the inhuman traffic carried on to the coast  
of Africa, for the importation of slaves.

They consider this trade so repugnant  
to the principles of humanity, to those  
ideas of the rights of mankind which  
form the basis of the government of the  
United States, and to the benign senti-  
ments of the Christian religion, that it  
ought



ought not to receive any countenance from those who profess to be under the influence of either.

Your memorialists regret, that the powers of the general government are so limited, on this head, as to prevent their totally inhibiting, for the present, this disgraceful traffic.

But, as the manner of conducting it is attended with circumstances of injustice and cruelty, for remedy of which the powers of Congress are competent, your memorialists humbly confide, that these powers will be exercised to alleviate, as much as possible, an evil, which cannot, as yet, be entirely prevented.

Your memorialists hope, that, while a number of the greatest and best men, in two of the first nations in Europe, are assiduously employed in endeavouring to banish this dishonorable trade from their own countries, that the rulers of the United States of America, who have set these nations so fair an example of respect for the rights of human nature, will not fail to do all in their power to lessen the miseries

series of the wretched Africans, whose rights, by this practice, are so outrageously violated.

Your memorialists, therefore, humbly pray, that your honorable body will exercise the powers with which you are invested, in alleviating, as much as possible, the horrors of the slave trade.

And, as in duty bound, your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

Signed, in behalf of the Society,

MATTHEW CLARKSON,  
*Vice-President.*

*New-York, December 14, 1790.*

(Copy.)





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# Pennsylvania.

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To the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
of the UNITED STATES—

*The MEMORIAL of the PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and for improving the Condition of the African race :*

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT, actuated by the same powerful motives of duty which excited your memorialists to address the late Congress on the subject of slavery, in the month of February, 1790, we are again impelled to request your serious attention to the important business of the slave trade.

We wish not to trespass upon your time, by referring to the different declarations

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made

made by Congress on the unalienable right of all men to equal liberty ; neither would we attempt, in this place, to point out the inconsistency of extending freedom to a part only of the human race. The object of the present application is, to intreat you to consider of some method speedily to put into effect the two following Resolves, agreed to by the committee of the whole House, and entered on your Journals in March, 1790.

“ That Congress have authority to re-  
 “ strain the citizens of the United States  
 “ from carrying on the African trade for  
 “ the purpose of supplying foreigners with  
 “ slaves, and of providing, by proper re-  
 “ gulations, for the humane treatment,  
 “ during their passage, of slaves imported,  
 “ by the said citizens, into the States ad-  
 “ mitting such importation.”

“ That Congress have also authority to  
 “ prohibit foreigners from fitting out ves-  
 “ sels, in any port of the United States,  
 “ for transporting persons from Africa to  
 “ any foreign port.”

We hope our zeal in this business will  
 not

not be regarded as an improper intrusion on your councils. We know not of any concern, in which human beings can be engaged, more likely to draw down a blessing on their country, than that of “doing unto others as they would that others should do unto them.” And, in the pleasing hope that this solemn truth will also gain a full assent in your minds, we submit the cause at present; earnestly praying, that you may be so directed, in the consideration of this important business, that the result of your deliberations may tend to advance the honor of the United States, and to improve the happiness of mankind universally.

Signed by order, and in behalf of the  
 Pennsylvania Society for promoting  
 the Abolition of Slavery, &c.

JAMES PEMBERTON,  
*President.*

Attested,

JOHN M'CREA, }  
 JOSEPH P. NORRIS, } *Secretaries.*

*Philadelphia, October 3, 1791.*





To the Honorable the CONGRESS of  
the UNITED STATES—

*The PETITION of the Members of the  
WASHINGTON SOCIETY, for the  
Relief of Free Negroes, and others, un-  
lawfully held in Bondage:*

SHEWETH,

**T**HAT, inasmuch as, by construction  
of the ninth section of the first arti-  
cle of the government of the United States,  
a traffic to Africa for slaves may be carri-  
ed on by such of the States as may think  
proper to admit slaves; your petitioners,  
deeply impressed by the unhappy policy  
which rendered such a construction of the  
said section necessary, do humbly pray,  
that the honorable the Congress will, by  
law, regulate the traffic, or trade, in such  
manner, as may lessen the miseries of the  
unhappy Negroes on their passage by sea,  
which

which usually attend them for want of air, victuals, and convenient room—And your petitioners further pray, that Congress may, so far as may be consistent with said section, discourage all such traffic, by preventing foreigners from bringing slaves to the United States, and citizens from carrying on such trade to foreign countries—And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will pray.

Signed, on behalf of the members  
of the Society,

ANDREW SWEARINGEN,  
*Vice-President.*



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## Maryland.

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To the Honorable the CONGRESS of  
the UNITED STATES—

*The MEMORIAL of the Subscribers,  
formed into a Society for the Abolition  
of Slavery, &c. in BALTIMORE :*

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT the objects of their association are founded in reason and humanity. That, in addition to an avowed enmity to slavery in every form, your memorialists, in their exertions, contemplate a melioration of the condition of that unhappy part of the human race who are doomed to fill the degraded rank of slaves in our country, and a protection of the unhappy sons of Africa, who are entitled to liberty, but unjustly deprived of it.

In

In the prosecution of a work of so much benevolence, your memorialists would gladly claim the assistance of your honorable body ; but, with pain, they observe, that the constitution of the national government prohibits all interference, for a limited time, in the policy of any of the existing States, respecting the migration or importation of such persons as they shall think proper to admit. Whilst we deem this restraint a temporary sanction to the partial infraction of the rights of man, recognised by the laws of some of the States, and so far a defect in the noble structure of our liberties, yet, such is our regard to the original solemn compact of society, that we solicit no deviation from the principles established by it. But, as your honorable body has justly and wisely determined, “ that you have authority to restrain the citizens of the United States from carrying on the African trade, for the purpose of supplying foreigners with slaves, and of providing, by proper regulations, for the humane treatment, during their passage, of slaves imported  
“ by

“ by the citizens into the States admitting  
 “ such importation;” and also “ have au-  
 “ thority to prohibit foreigners from fit-  
 “ ting out vessels in any port of the United  
 “ States, for transporting persons from A-  
 “ frica to any foreign port,” your memo-  
 rialists would humbly solicit, that, at your  
 present session, you would exercise such  
 your authority. It is no less painful to  
 know, than to communicate to your ho-  
 norable body, that a traffic so degrading  
 to the rights of man, and so repugnant to  
 reason and religion, as that in human flesh,  
 is carried on by the free citizens of these  
 free governments, for the supply of fo-  
 reigners—thus exhibiting to the world the  
 curious and horrid spectacle, of liberty  
 supporting slavery—and the successful as-  
 sertor of his own rights, the unprovoked  
 and cruel invader of the rights of others.  
 It is no less notorious, that foreign ships  
 have, in repeated instances, been fitted, in  
 the ports of the United States, for the ne-  
 farious trade of which we complain. To  
 correct practices so dishonourable, and in-  
 consistent with the principles which free-



men profess—practices, which immediately tend to the corruption of morals, the annihilation of religion, and total debasement of the human character, must be worthy of legislative wisdom and attention. The rights of man can never be seriously venerated, or long supported, by a people familiar in the abuse of those rights. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, perhaps, to the long and happy duration of our excellent government, that a trade, so pregnant with corruption as that in slavery, should be early and effectually checked, as far as the powers of Congress extend.

Under these impressions, and with these sentiments, your honorable body will pardon our application and a repetition of our prayer, That the African trade may be totally prohibited to the citizens of these United States for the supply of foreigners—That foreign ships, destined for the slave trade, may be prohibited from fitting in the ports of the United States—and, That proper regulations may be adopted for the humane treatment of slaves imported  
into

into the States admitting such importation.

*Signed by the Members generally.*

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Similar Petitions were presented from  
CHESTER-TOWN SOCIETY and CAROLINE-COUNTY SOCIETY, signed by

JAMES M. ANDERSON,  
*President.*

*(In behalf, and by order of Chester-Town Society.)*

Dated Novem. 19, 1791.

**Attest.**

DANIEL M'CURTIN, *Secretary.*

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EDWARD WHITE,  
*Vice-President.*

*(In behalf, and by order of Caroline-County Society.)*

Dated Sept. 6, 1791.

**Attest.**

CHA. EMERY, *Secretary.*





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## Virginia.

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To the Honorable the CONGRESS of  
the UNITED STATES of AME-  
RICA—

*The MEMORIAL of the VIRGINIA  
SOCIETY, for promoting the Abolition  
of Slavery, and the Relief of free Negroes,  
and others, unlawfully held in bondage,  
and for other humane purposes :*

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT your memorialists, fully be-  
lieving that “righteousness exalteth  
“a nation,” and that slavery is not only  
an odious degradation, but an outrageous  
violation of one of the most essential  
rights of human nature, and utterly re-  
pugnant to the precepts of the gospel,  
which

which breathes "peace on earth, good-will to men;" they lament that a practice, so inconsistent with true policy and the unalienable rights of men, should subsist in so enlightened an age, and among a people professing, that all mankind are, by nature, equally entitled to freedom. But, more especially, that a trade to Africa, for the express purpose of enslaving and transporting that much-injured and oppressed people from their native country and connections, should be continued, or suffered, by any of the United States of America.

Your memorialists do, therefore, request, and earnestly intreat Congress to take the premises into consideration, and exert the powers they are possessed of, in passing such laws as may put a stop to, or discourage, so unrighteous a traffic; and alleviate, as much as possible, the horrors and cruelties generally practised in the prosecution of the trade, so contrary to every sentiment of humanity and justice, and destructive of the lives and temporal happiness of that unfortunate race of mankind.

kind. They conceive that an act so laudable, would well become the Representatives of a free people, and be pleasing in the sight of the merciful Father of all the families of the earth.

Signed, by appointment, and on behalf of the said Society, at their half-yearly meeting, held in the town of Manchester the 5th day of the 4th month, called April, 1791.

ROBERT PLEASANTS,  
*President.*

**Attest.**

JAMES SMITH, *Secretary.*

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*FINIS.*

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...would well become the ...  
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